

May 22, 1967—3:15 A.M. Walt Cramdon,* a "special watch officer" at the U.S. Central Intelligence Agency in Langley, Virginia, recognizes a code term for "critical" at the top of an innocuously-worded telegram about American tourists that is coming through the "Midcast" teletypewriter. Looking through a sheaf of other telegrams that have arrived in the last hour, Cramdon sees other "critical" notations on messages about weather forecasts, traveling diplomats' accommodations, and applications for passports. Cramdon takes the telegrams to another part of the Operations Room, which is on the seventh floor of the CIA's sprawling white headquarters building. There he feeds the sheets through a computer-operated decoding machine that scans and decodes the telegrams at the rate of about a hundred words per minute, or about as fast as a typist can type. The concealed messages are now made clear: Egypt's president, Gamal Nasser, is meeting with his top military officers . . . Egyptian tanks are moving toward the four-mile Gaza Strip separating Egypt and Israel . . . Egyptian sailors apparently are laying mines in preparation for a blockade of the vital Strait of Tiran. . . .

As Cramdon knew from reading earlier reports, a major war had been developing between Egypt (which is supported by the Soviet Union) and Israel, which would be backed by the United States if Russia gave direct military assistance to Egypt. Cramdon phones his superior officer, then the White House's underground Situation Room to ask if President Johnson might want a SNIE (Special National Intelligence Estimate)—in this case a prediction of what Russia may, and probably will, do in the Israeli-Egyptian crisis.

4:10 A.M. "Raw intelligence" begins to arrive steadily at CIA headquarters on the ONI (Office of Naval Intelligence) high-speed teletypewriters down the hall from the Operations Room, where another CIA officer stands beside a huge wall map of the Mediterranean Sea. Using a red crayon, he carefully marks the position of twelve Soviet ships and submarines, and about fifty of the U.S. Sixth Fleet's vessels in the Mediterranean. . . .

5:30 A.M. Men are filing into the CIA's Office of National Estimate to evaluate both incoming intelligence and previously digested information. One Soviet specialist reads dispatches about military movements in the previous twenty-four hours. Another intelligence expert gives an analysis of Nasser's temperament, his latest economic and political problems, his military strength, and of just how much support Nasser

*For security reasons, the officer's name cannot be used.

CIA 1.04. Cramdon, Walt

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P. Surface, Bill

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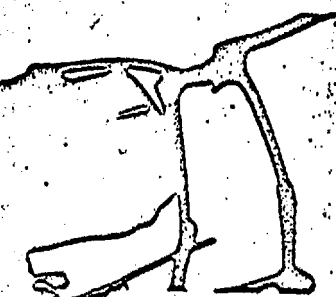


Girl's Guide to the

CIA

You know how spying is done in the movies. Now find out how it is organized and handled by your own Government.

by Bill Surface



might receive from other Arab nations defeat. A third specialist pores over updated reports on Israel's air force. . . . The men sit smoking, writing, and occasionally throwing discarded notes into clear-plastic wastebaskets labeled "Burn—Burn—Burn." (Later, the baskets' contents will be emptied into locked canvas bags by armed officers and burned in an underground incinerator that has a screened smokestack to prevent any paper from rising with the smoke.)

7:30 A.M. Senior officers meet with Richard Helms, the CIA's tall, suave director, who has been an intelligence officer for the U.S. Government for some twenty-five of his fifty-four years and is experienced in handling crises. For years he was the CIA's DDP (Deputy Director for Plans), a respectable title for what spies call "the sexy, cloak-and-dagger stuff." Helms reads the drafts of the report, discarding what he considers extraneous matter, then O.K.s the report for transmission to the President.

9:00 A.M. A detailed analysis on the Israeli-Egyptian crisis is typed, initialed "FI" (Finished Intelligence), retyped, and inserted into a black loose-leaf notebook bearing the CIA seal and the notation, "The President's Intelligence Brief—CAUTION: For the President's Eyes Only." Then the notebook is locked into a briefcase and handcuffed to a CIA officer who is driven to the White House (followed by a black automobile carrying two men with shotguns), presumably about the time that the CIA's Russian counterpart, known by the initials KGB (Soviet Committee for State Security), has finished its "estimate" of the Israeli-Egyptian crisis. After receiving this particular CIA brief, President Johnson announces that the U.S.A. is "firmly committed" to Israel's "political independence." Coincidentally, Russia pledges "resolute resistance to aggression," an ambiguous diplomatic term for saying: "We'll get tough over this."

. . . And that is a not-typical (but not all that *untypical*) example of how the CIA operates during a time of emergency.

With Failure, Instant Notoriety

During most of its history, the United States has operated on the theory that "gentlemen don't read each other's mail" (at least not during peacetime), and as a result we have, until recent years, lagged behind other large nations in the dubious art of spying. When the Government did begin "reading" just before World War II, it still had no one

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